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11 June 1965

DCI BRIEFING FOR

SENATOR STENNIS

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VIETNAM

- I. In North Vietnam, we are beginning to see some of the dimensions of the Soviet assistance program.
  - A. We have found three surface-to-air missile sites so far, all of them generally about 13 miles or so from Hanoi to the south. At least two of them are still under construction. Only one of the sites has any equipment in evidence,, and our reconnaissance has detected no missiles yet.
    1. A Soviet diplomat recently said that there are also sites around the port city of Haiphong. We have no evidence to substantiate this remark, but weather has prevented good photography of the Haiphong area for about a month.

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B. The latest photography shows eight IL-28 BEAGLE light jet bombers in North Vietnam, all of them flown in across China from the Soviet Union. There are also 63 MIG-15 or MIG-17 jet fighters, and a few more being assembled. The first 44 of these were flown in from China; the rest have apparently been shipped in crates from the Soviet Union.

1. Another Soviet diplomat has hinted that some of the jet fighters are being flown by Soviet pilots. We have no evidence of this, and believe that there are enough trained North Vietnamese pilots to handle the aircraft they have on hand.
2. On June 4, Communist jet fighters over North Vietnam made their first attempt in two months to engage US aircraft. Four MIG fighters jumped two US Navy fighters flying a protective patrol about 30 miles south of Hanoi. They fired unguided air-to-air missiles which missed. One of our pilots obtained a lock-on with his radar on one of the Communist jets, but his missile failed to fire. Before any further action could be taken, the MIGs broke contact and took off for the North.

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- C. The Soviets are apparently also providing the North Vietnamese with more effective radars, and possibly antiaircraft guns.
- D. The latest phase of our air attacks on North Vietnam involves some economic targets, such as Thermal power plants and port facilities, and a few targets just north of the 20th parallel. The major emphasis continues to be on military targets and transportation facilities.
  - 1. The North Vietnamese are using ferries to replace destroyed bridges. This requires lighter loads, and more trucks. Intercepted messages show that thousands of workers from the northern part of the country are being moved south to repair roads and bridges.
- E. In early June we received additional indications that the North Vietnamese for the present are completely uninterested in discussing negotiations. The North Vietnamese Foreign Minister, talking to the chief of the Canadian ICC delegation, simply repeated

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the standard Hanoi "Four Points" which center on the complete withdrawal of the US military presence in South Vietnam.

II. Peiping is probably quite optimistic about Communist prospects in South Vietnam, and the Chinese are almost certainly encouraging the DRV and Viet Cong to keep the pressure on--and possibly to step up the pace of the war. Peiping's recent actions suggest that the Chinese believe this course has increased the chances of a US escalation which might involve air strikes against targets inside China.

A. In the past few weeks Peiping has made a concerted effort to deter the US by a series of new warnings concerning the possible consequences.

1. Chinese propaganda and private statements by ~~leaders~~ in Peiping have apparently been calculated to underscore earlier threats that Communist China might become more directly involved, and would respond to blows against China by launching a Korean-type war in Southeast Asia.

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2. There is, however, no evidence that the Chinese are making active preparations for intervention of this sort at the present time.

B. These warnings have been accompanied by increased civil defense preparations, which probably reflect genuine Chinese fears that the warnings may have no effect.

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May to step up civil defense measures, especially in southern regions.

2. Plans to evacuate nonessential citizens to the countryside have been reported from half a dozen cities. Numerous localities have been noted conducting air raid drills and building air raid shelters.

3. Civil defense preparations noted so far should not be taken as signs that the Chinese intend to initiate a major new military action in Southeast Asia. No unusual troop deployments have been noted recently in South China and the Chinese military posture in general appears defensive.

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The continuing rail disruptions in South China probably reflect priority shipment of military freight to North Vietnam from China and the USSR but are not of a magnitude which would suggest any major Chinese troop movement.

- III. In South Vietnam, the expected summer offensive by the Viet Cong has apparently begun. <sup>major focus is shifting</sup> The/back and forth between the provinces in the north of the country, and those immediately to the north and northeast of Saigon. There are still major Viet Cong concentrations which have not been committed.
- A. Beginning with a wide-ranging series of attacks on main north-south land communications at the end of May, action increased markedly in the northern coastal provinces and highlands areas.
1. The major Viet Cong action in this area was a regimental assault around the government outpost of Ba Gia in Quang Ngai Province, in which three government battalions were chewed up before the Viet Cong were driven off by airstrikes after three days.

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2. This battle was followed by a series of 12 successful Viet Cong ambushes, all but two of them in the highlands provinces bordering Laos and Cambodia.
  3. A Viet Cong who defected on June 3rd in the highlands province of Phu Bon claimed to be from North Vietnam's 328th Division, and alleged that all three of the division's regiments are now in Kontum, Pleiku, and Phu Bon provinces. His statements are not confirmed, but sizeable forces were clearly involved in recent ambushes in all three provinces.
4. In the past few days, Viet Cong activity has again been intense just north and northeast of Saigon. Intercepted communications indicate that the Viet Cong have set up a tactical command in this area, which normally implies operations above regimental strength.
1. The most serious action here was the temporary seizure of the district town of Dong Xoi in Phuoc Long Province by a full Viet Cong regiment; at least one government relief battalion was mauled before the Communists were driven out today with the help of air support; full casualties are not yet known.



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C. While we cannot yet be sure how extensive the Viet Cong offensive this summer will be, we are inclined to believe that the Communists will intensify existing patterns of classic guerilla activity designed to isolate and erode government forces, while avoiding major set-piece battles where government air power can be brought to bear most effectively.

D. US Strength in South Vietnam now amounts to about 53,500 men. About 21,000 of these are listed as combat forces. An Australian infantry battalion has arrived, and the South Koreans are talking about sending a division to South Vietnam.

IV. The Quat Government in Saigon appears to be facing a major challenge to its survival, which is diverting it from the tasks at hand.

A. The latest crisis grew out of Premier Quat's efforts to reshuffle his cabinet, without apparently laying the groundwork as effectively as he did last month in getting the army to stop its political intervention.

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1. Chief of State Suu blocked two of Quat's new appointments on constitutional grounds, this gave Quat's critics among militant Catholics and dissatisfied southern regionalists an opening to try to topple the premier.
  2. Her opposition is strong enough so that Quat has been forced to appeal to the military to resolve the problem.

B. While the military have appeared reluctant to become involved in politics at a time when the war requires full attention, they are showing impatience over prolonged civilian quarrelling; there is no assurance that they will that they will find a satisfactory solution short of having to resume effective political control themselves.

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